

97-84092-13

White, Andrew Dickson

A letter to patriotic
Democrats

[S.I.]

[1896]

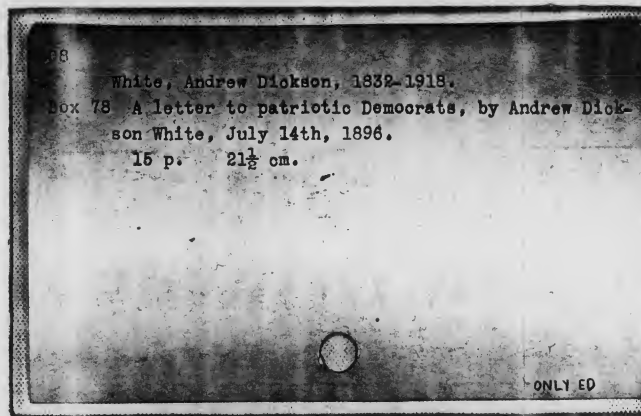
97-84092-13

MASTER NEGATIVE #

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DIVISION

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

ORIGINAL MATERIAL AS FILMED - EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD



RESTRICTIONS ON USE: Reproductions may not be made without permission from Columbia University Libraries.

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mm

REDUCTION RATIO: 10:1

IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA ☒ IIA IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 5-19-97

INITIALS: RB

TRACKING #: MSH 21807

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

308
2
Box 78

A LETTER
TO
PATRIOTIC DEMOCRATS

BY
ANDREW DICKSON WHITE.

1832

JULY 14th, 1896.

GENTLEMEN :

As one who feels honored by a personal acquaintance with you, and who respects you for your character, abilities and public services, permit me to address you regarding the present political crisis. I believe that many of you know, that though a lifelong Republican, I have always attempted to do justice to the motives, theories and acts of all honest men in your party, sometimes even risking in consequence the good-will of my own.

What I shall now say will not be at all the utterance of a Republican as such to Democrats, but of a citizen to his fellow-citizens, whom he knows to be experienced, thoughtful and patriotic. I recognize the fact that from the days of Jefferson and Hamilton two parties, representing two great natural classes of political thought, have been a necessity; that they are a necessity now, and will long remain so, and that the destruction, debasement or perversion of either is an injury to the other and to the whole country.

The majority, masquerading under the garb of Democracy, at Chicago, has done its worst. It has made a platform which is diametrically opposed to Democracy, as developed by Jefferson, Jackson, Benton, Seymour, Tilden and all the great leaders of the party.

More than this, it is a platform leading logically and historically, as I shall presently show, to a despotism which is the very opposite of all Democracy, and in which all Democracy and Republicanism worthy of the name would be extinguished.

On the details of this platform I need hardly dwell. You know, as well as I, that it is the negation of modern civilization, to say nothing of justice, honesty and honor. You know how contemptuously all efforts to

mitigate its most deadly features were repelled. But, bad as this is, it is not the worst.

For you must know, too, that it is but the first instalment of anarchist doctrine. If not resisted and overwhelmed now it is absolutely certain to be followed by other parts of the programme, especially the absorption of the bonds and stocks of railroads, telegraphs and various productive enterprises of the country, with payment for them, if at all, in a paper currency of nominal value, and their management by the central government, under the cry that all such things have been built up for the people, belong to the people and should be managed by the people. Nor will confiscation stop even there. Other extreme measures are already vaguely foreshadowed and will be pushed, and some which even the boldest have hardly dared hint at will yet be put in platforms to attract new votes of cranks and dupes, and in the hope that perhaps some new folly may obviate, modify or obscure the consequences of the old.

The platform indicates this by its denunciation of any adjustment, no matter how equitable, of the Pacific Railroad question, by its proposed treatment of the Supreme Court of the United States and by its demand, practically, for free riots in every State.

The candidate himself gives no uncertain warning of this more highly developed policy of spoliation. You will have noticed that he declares that "the right to coin money and *issue* money is a function of the Government." Taking this in connection with his associates and antecedents we must look for a further step in this development of spoliation under his guidance; that is, the unlimited issue of irredeemable paper, not only to cover existing obligations of the Government, but to pay for all private property which Anarchists and Socialists may think it best for the central Government to absorb and administer.

The arguments for the present Chicago platform lead with remorseless logic to this extension of Governmental powers, involving wide-spread confiscation and a centralizing despotism. The same demagogues who have pushed their doctrines thus far will, in the name of the farmers of the West, declare that having secured transportation of their products at a far lower rate than is known in any other country in the world—the lowest rate consistent with any return to those who have placed their capital in transportation enterprises—this is not yet sufficient, that the people must have the services of railways, telegraphs and the like at a rate still lower, or for nothing; and that this can only be done when the people shall "resume the ownership" and assume the management of these enterprises through the Government—the managers at the centre of power to be, of course, the sort of men who took control of your recent convention.

The coal and other mines can, by arguments equally logical, be absorbed, payment being made at first in debased coin, and finally in unlimited paper. Confiscation having thus taken place under the forms of law, the confiscated property must be managed for the people, and this can only be done by a concentration of powers in the central Government, and consequently by a central despotism, not excelled, if indeed it is equalled, in Russia. You think this picture overdrawn. It is but the logical outcome of the present situation. Let me ask you candidly, is this future platform any more improbable to you now than the present Chicago platform and candidate would have been to you four years ago? Suppose that any one had prophesied to you then that at the next Convention of your party the controlling spirits would be Altgeld and Tillman openly, and Peffer, Simpson and Stewart secretly. Suppose, too, that any one had prophesied that the President you were then

nominating, and whom you were destined to elect—the only President you have elected in thirty-five years—would be treated with every insult, both of omission and commission, and the real bone and sinew of the party, to whom alone it owed a new lease of its existence, kept out, or virtually driven out, of the convention—brutally, contemptuously, indecently. Would not such a prophecy have then been thought infinitely more absurd than anything I prophesy now? Remember that revolutions never go backward; that, like other conflagrations, they grow by what they feed upon. Meet them at the beginning with right reason and courage, and you can turn them; temporize, and they will devour you.

On this platform, aiming at present and prospective anarchy and socialism, the convention and its galleries placed "The Boy Orator of the Platte." Having amused the assembled mob at Chicago, he was repaid immediately by the nomination to the Presidency. It was in obedience to a similar impulse that a European despot in the last century turned over his Government to the actor who had delighted him at the theatre, and that a Roman Emperor gave the Chief Magistracy of the Republic to the horse which had pleased him in the circus.

For the first time in the history of the United States we have an anarchist and socialist platform, and for the first time, also, a candidate who has never given the slightest evidence of statesmanship. There have, indeed, been placed in nomination in days gone by, sundry great generals, but these, by commanding armies in the field, by carrying on great operations and by conducting important negotiations of various sorts, had shown at least some kind of fitness to deal with large questions. But only the qualification of this candidate—"The Boy Orator"—is, that during his brief career in Congress he made one or two speeches which amused

the House and pleased its galleries, and that during the recent convention he took the fancy of the mob by a single exhibition of flaring rhetoric. The most telling phrase of this rhetoric—the phrase which threw the galleries into ecstasy, was as ineane as it was repulsive, and nothing beyond his speeches is needed to show that both in temper and intellect he is utterly unfit to deal with the great questions which now confront the country, or, indeed, with any large questions whatever.

The scenes at the convention itself indicate a state of things against which all thoughtful men of both parties throughout the country, and you especially, as conservative leaders, should solidly and vigorously array yourselves. We have circumstantial reports of speeches and scenes, which, allowing for all journalistic exaggeration and "enterprise," would have brought ridicule upon the Jacobin Club at Paris, in the palmy days of the reign of terror. Well has one of your own Democratic organs remarked, that "lunacy having dictated the platform, it was fitting that hysteria should evolve the candidate."

I confess that the Republican party has had much folly to answer for in providing enormous galleries at its later nominating conventions, and in allowing an irresponsible crowd to meddle with, and almost dictate to and run away with, the convention; and as a member of such a convention I have more than once protested openly against this dangerous practice. But this last Chicago convention has left its predecessors far behind. Nothing has hitherto been depicted to us like its "lady representatives from Utah," or like its gushing men and hysterical women, "waltzing toward the platform, waving flags," and shrieking for the candidate they happened to fancy. It was a substitution of pandemonium for calm, weighty discussion.

In this seething mass of folly the honored representatives of the old Democracy were, as you too well know,

utterly lost. Instead of the Democrats heretofore known and honored in the country, the control was assumed, either directly or indirectly, from without or within, by the Altgelds, the Tillmans, the Blands, the Peffers, the Stewarts, the Simpsons, and their like; men who had outlived their usefulness, if they ever had any, both in the Democratic and Republican parties; and as if to show the hollowness of its pretensions and the hypocrisy of its claims, its permanent presiding officer was a Senator who owed his seat in the Senate, and therefore in the convention, to the railway corporations of which he was the paid attorney; and one of the controlling spirits stirring the mass from beneath was another Senator who owed his presence in the Senate, and therefore in the convention, to the fact that he is a millionaire mining monopolist.

Democracy has heretofore stood as a conservative force in the country, but at this convention we see in control a heterogeneous mass of anarchists, socialists, populists, speculators and sectionalists—the strength of neither of the great parties, and the pest of both. From the Southern States we heard no voices of the men who have so nobly devoted themselves to opposing unreason, and to building up the “New South;” from the Western States we heard no voices of those who have developed the industries, the systems of communication, the great educational enterprises, the real civilization of those great regions. All such voices were stifled. But we heard from the South the phrase makers, the formula peddlers, the sensation mongers, the demagogues of the old sort, who have always cost the South so dear—the sort who formerly hurraed for secession and who are now screaming as lustily for confiscation. From the West we saw a representation of all sorts of architects of ruin, and especially the wild schemers and dreamers and “fog horns”—the men who, as a rule, having failed to conduct successfully

any business of their own, think that they are entitled to take charge of the business of the nation; men of whom such amazing types were exhibited in the convention itself, and in the fringe of political folly hanging about it.

What other outcome from such a source could there be than a policy of confiscation, ruin, distress and dishonor?

What is the duty of sound Democrats, among whom your fellow-citizens class you—of men faithful to the traditions of their party, who love it, who know the value of it, who wish to save it?

I will answer this question as one who recognizes the necessity of two great parties, and the fact that each is necessary to the other.

To me partisanship at this moment is nothing. Were the crisis reversed, or the Republican candidate standing even on half as wild a platform as that recently adopted at Chicago, and the Democratic candidate standing on anything approaching a sound currency platform, I would most certainly vote and work to the utmost for the latter.

I can see but one way eventually to preserve the Democratic party, as well as to prevent a national catastrophe, and this I trust that you will allow me to suggest. This one way is for you and the sound Democracy, frankly, boldly, unqualifiedly, to break loose from this wild mob masquerading in the Democratic garb, and, like the great “War Democrats” during our civil struggle, to cast in your lot fully, for the time, at least, with the party which you have heretofore opposed. I fully believe that this is not only the patriotic course as regards the country, but the expedient course as regards your party and yourselves. Cass, Dix, Dickinson, Butler, Alvord, Sickles, and the host of other strong “War Democrats,” who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Republicans in the

former great crisis, furnish your example and your encouragement in this. Their course was regarded by the great body of the American people, and has passed into history, as most honorable. They were welcomed, in the new party thus formed, to leading places in its councils, and, after the crisis had passed, those who thought it their duty to return to the Democratic party were welcomed all the more cordially and heartily because they represented the bold, patriotic, determined element which placed the country above all party ties, and by so doing did much to save the Democratic name from disgrace and the party from dissolution.

Of course, I know well that in doing this you have to conquer your dislike for certain minor doctrines. Your first difficulty—probably your main difficulty—is the tariff question. You are, perhaps, for free trade still, in spite of the blows that a free-trade policy has received within the last three years from its alleged supporters. But let me ask you candidly, after the experience of these three years, do you see anything better to hope for in the combined efforts of the Populists and their "Democratic" allies? Do you not feel that even a Republican administration, supported at this crisis by patriotic Democrats, is likely to do far less violence to your convictions, even on this question, than this wild combination of Jack Cade elements, no matter how loudly it proclaims its Democracy?

Even if you utterly reject the Republican ideas regarding the development of the national industries, on another thing—and that infinitely the more important—we are agreed. You know that the financial policy laid down at Chicago means individual and national bankruptcy, distress and dishonor. You know that its premises are false, its promises delusive, its consequences ruinous. You know that it means the wreck of life and fire insurance companies, trust com-

panies, savings banks, banks of deposit, building and loan associations and monetary institutions to an enormous extent throughout the country. You know that it means vast loss to the very men it is intended to lure, and to them above all others—the farmers and workingmen. For, as regards the farmers, to say nothing of diminished demand for their products, any probability of anarchist success in the approaching campaign will cause the foreclosure of thousands upon thousands of past due mortgages; and, as regards the workingmen, I need hardly remind you that wages never rise so fast or so far as inflation prices. The disastrous results to merchants and manufactures are too evident to be dwelt upon.

You know that these anarchist doctrines contradict not only all human experience, but the doctrines of the entire Democratic party from the beginning. What are the things which you, as Democrats, and which sound Democrats generally, have most strongly opposed? They are paternalism and despotism; but what other paternalism was ever to be compared with this infliction of repudiation upon the country under the pretense of caring for the people; and what trick of despotism has inflicted greater misery, or been more steadily opposed by sound Democracy, than the plundering of the people by the debasement of the currency?

I might add another thing. If you, as Democrats, glory in one thing above all others, in the history of your party, it is in its opposition to sectionalism; but just at the moment when industrial expositions in the North and South, and various other causes, had mingled the people of all regions into one, you have a new sectionalism arising in this convention, worse than the old, asserted again and again by men like Tillman in the South and "The Boy Orator" and his compeers in the extreme West; their main grievance being the thrift and prosperity of the great Central and Eastern States

in our nation, and the fact that these States have furnished so much of the capital which has built up the West and South.

Therefore it is that I call on you, and men like you, to come out of that mob of unreason, and to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Republican party for the country. I again remind you of the "War Democrats" during the Civil War. Holding in abeyance doctrines they had most cherished, they boldly supported Abraham Lincoln to save the country. I appeal to you, and through you to all thinking Democrats, now to support William McKinley for the same reason. Dislike any minor doctrines he represents as you may, he showed his patriotism as a common soldier; he has had a long and valuable experience in public life; he is an honest man; he owes his nomination to no "deals" or huckstering, and, least of all, to rhetorical antics before an excited mob. Some of you certainly must be drawn to him by the fact that, unlike the Chicago nominee, he has long adhered, not merely theoretically, but practically, to the doctrine of a public service in which appointments shall be made for merit and not for favoritism—the only truly Democratic idea of a public service—and, above all, because he is firmly planted on the right side of the one issue in this campaign.

I appeal to you to exercise that decisive courage of the "War Democrats" and you will be honored for it by the whole country now, and by all that has any right to call itself the Democratic party later; and if the day ever comes when the Democratic party shall have recovered from this foul blow just dealt it, you can resume sway in your own party with flying colors, with the authority of men who were not carried away in the wildest burst of political madness ever seen in our country. If, such a time never comes you can aid in developing a great national party, bearing, indeed, the old and honored name—the name which the party

you have served so long hitherto first bore—"The Democratic-Republican Party." Such a new party, having saved the country, can maintain it.

Bear in mind that your responsibilities are vast indeed. We are at the parting of the ways: this is no ordinary crisis; it is a possible revolution; its apostles announce it as such; the Chicago platform, it not resisted now, is the first step in a long and rapid development of confiscation, plunder and violence, and therefore it is that, as an American citizen to American citizens, and as a friend to friends, I ask you to realize the crisis in which we all stand, to act promptly and courageously, to stand with us for the general welfare in this emergency, with the certainty that in this way alone can you do justice to yourselves, your party and your country.

I remain, most respectfully yours,

ANDREW D. WHITE.

ITHACA, N. Y., July 14th, 1896.

MSH 21807

**END OF
TITLE**